

The Asian Age

style sutra

Sunday Age 39

SUNDAY 5 | APRIL 2015



Jaipur Modern



Christian Louboutin store in Mumbai (design architect: 212 Box, New York)



(Here and below right) Louboutin store, Bangkok

Forging a new design route

ROOZHAD SHROFF'S DESIGN JOURNEY HAS BEEN INFLUENCED BY — YET DIFFERS FROM — THE GLOBAL LUMINARIES HE'S WORKED WITH

● ROHINI NAIR

You might say that design is in Rooshad Shroff's DNA. The man responsible for the distinctive looks of the Christian Louboutin boutiques in Mumbai (where he was the local architect) and Bangkok (he was the design architect), the new La Folie Patisserie outpost at the Palladium in Mumbai and several other spaces, Shroff set up his eponymous studio in 2011. Shroff's success isn't very surprising: As an undergraduate at Cornell, Shroff won the Edward Palmer York Memorial Prize and his graduating thesis was exhibited at the Beijing Architecture Biennial in 2006. Later, his work at Harvard's Graduate School of Design was displayed at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennial and the 2010 Shanghai Expo. And

even as he studied design, he interned with luminaries in the field like Cho Padamsee (in Goa), Issey Miyake and Rem Koolhaas (both in New York) and Zaha Hadid in London.

As illustrious as these milestones are, Shroff's design journey can be traced a lot further back. With an architect dad and an interior designer mum, Shroff (and his brother) were involved in conversations about design early on. Visits to the studio and project sites were commonplace. "It wasn't 'instilled' in us, just something we were exposed to," says Shroff. "When we would accompany our father to project sites, there would be the excitement of seeing something realised, from the drawing board. There was a sense of how architecture changes the city."

The Shroff family loved to travel, and their holidays would invariably have on the itinerary, trips to design museums and galleries. "We used to call those trips 'Daddy's Day Out,'" says Shroff. A holiday in Italy proved particularly impactful: "Seeing the architecture, the space, light, organi-

sation of volume, attention to detail, the ornamentation was inspiring," Shroff says.

Later, Shroff's experiences of working with leading designers would influence other facets of his own approach. "One thing I learned is to work on multiple options," he says. "We spend a lot of time on R&D. With design, you can never say you're finished — only time runs out. After a project is complete, you step back and feel you could have done this or that differently..."

However, there are aspects in which Shroff's oeuvre differs significantly from that of all those designers he worked with.

When he set up his studio, Shroff focused more on the handmade and individual. "At the offices I worked in, there was great emphasis on technology, on a new language of making. Zaha's work especially was very high on tech," Shroff says, admitting,



"At first, I was very seduced by it." However, when he returned to India, Shroff felt "something was lacking — a sense of authorship". So Rooshad collaborated with craftsmen here, creating contemporary designs that drew on traditional techniques. He also explored various design directions: For instance, if he is working on a retail space, that might mean not just designing the look of the space itself, but also the graphics, logos, packaging, landscape etc. "A project should be seen in totality," Shroff says. "The way a person would

experience it." Ask Shroff what inspires him now to create, and he says, "no one thing in particular". But travel certainly gives him lots of ideas. "You learn something new on every trip: How people interact with spaces, the vernacular language of architecture, signage, even food presentation," Shroff says.

And of course, his family is always around to discuss projects with (Shroff's brother and sister-in-law are also architects). "All of us have different design vocabularies and aesthetics. We're each other's critics. Sometimes I feel if they don't like my work, I'm on the right track!" says Rooshad, and laughs. "We do bounce ideas off each other, and it brings in a fresh perspective. I enjoy it."



C-Chair; (right) Stainless Steel Chair in collaboration with Godrej Design Lab

